

Zero Retries Special Edition 2023-07-09

Zero Retries is an independent newsletter promoting technological innovation in Amateur Radio, and Amateur Radio as (literally) a license to experiment with and learn about radio technology.

About Zero Retries

Steve Stroh N8GNJ, Editor

Jack Stroh, Late Night Assistant Editor Emeritus

Request To Send

Editorial by Steve Stroh N8GNJ

This is the first of periodic “behind the scenes” updates for the paid subscribers of Zero Retries.



Image courtesy of Stockvault.net

It's been just over a week since I activated optional paid subscriptions for Zero Retries, and I wanted to take a few minutes on a beautiful sunny, mild day here in Bellingham to say Thank You for your generosity and support of Zero Retries in stepping up to be a *paid subscriber* to Zero Retries. I'm especially grateful to

Founding Member 0000 - Steven Davidson K3FZT
Founding Member 0001 - Chris Osburn KD7DVD
Founding Member 0002 - Don Rotolo N2IRZ
for their special generosity that has “kickstarted” Zero Retries revenue.

Given that I have committed to making almost all content I generate for Zero Retries publicly available (no paywall), that you paid subscribers stepped up to support Zero Retries, when Zero Retries is available for free, *is notable*. And, greatly appreciated!

When I announced that I *would be* activating optional paid subscriptions, there were a number of “unsubscribes”. When I announced that I *had* activated optional paid subscriptions, there were another number of “unsubscribes”. I expected this to happen, and the number of unsubscribes was less than I had guessed, and it certainly wasn’t so many to be discouraging. As I report each week in the minutiae of information at the end of each issue, the total number of subscribers of Zero Retries remains comfortably above 800, and Zero Retries continues to receive a handful of new subscriptions each week.

As one paid subscriber said, “I doubt you’re getting *retirement rich* from subscriptions, but I’m happy to help.” That subscriber was correct - Zero Retries paid subscriptions are *definitely not* generating “retirement rich” revenue, but that wasn’t the goal, and Zero Retries wasn’t begun, nor the decision to continue it in the long term, wasn’t predicated on high revenue.

Now that some revenue from Zero Retries has flowed in, I thought I’d let you paid subscribers know of a few improvements that revenue has made possible.

Starlink for N8GNJ Labs

The first change is that I’ve now decided to use Starlink as *the* Internet connection for N8GNJ Labs. I had been a bit ambivalent about continuing to use Starlink after a few months of testing it out given its cost of \$120 / month. Our household has access to Comcast broadband Internet service which is OK overall and its reliability is “most of the time” (but it’s definitely not Fiber to the Premises¹), and thus I didn’t *need* Starlink service.

Because I was undecided about continuing Starlink, to date I haven’t permanently installed and especially have not yet optimized my Starlink terminal. Now, having made the decision to keep it, I will do so. Once I do get it permanently installed, Starlink service it will probably be reliable enough that I’ll “backfeed” it from N8GNJ Labs into the house, which will take a bit of work which I’ll have to defer given all the family activities scheduled for much of the rest of 2023.

I think Starlink is a remarkable capability for Amateur Radio Operators, especially coupled with a backup power system for the shack that can maintain long periods of power for radios and Starlink. In my opinion, Starlink Internet is a great complement for an area Winlink Radio Mail Server (RMS) as it can provide Internet connectivity when local Internet infrastructure - cable Internet, cellular Internet, etc. and / or grid power is unavailable. At TAPR DCC 2022, Tom McDermott N5EG did a great presentation about Starlink - [Starlink, AREDN, and Networking](#). Although N5EG’s focus was on “tunneling” AREDN over Starlink, everything he said, and the solutions he developed for the “issues” with Starlink, was applicable to using Starlink as an Internet connection for Winlink.

I’ll continue to discuss Starlink in Zero Retries, not just its utility as broadband Internet access, but because it’s a technology that is, of course, Zero Retries Interesting. And you paid subscribers literally made such coverage of Starlink in Zero Retries possible.

Zoom Pro

Having a paid Zoom (video conference) account is a game-changer for a small newsletter like Zero Retries. While Zoom does offer a free plan, it has significant limitations. The entry level paid plan of Zoom (Pro) is \$149 / year, and will allow me to:

- Send invitations to meetings (unlimited) of up to 100 participants, of up to 30 hours duration,
- Conduct interviews via videoconference, with automatic recordings, and (I think) automatic transcriptions, which will make writing articles from interviews much more efficient, and
- In addition to research for Zero Retries, I will have a video recording that may be used for YouTube and an audio recording that may be used for a podcast.
- I do not have any solid plans yet, but with Zoom Pro, it’s possible to offer a Zero Retries conference that focuses solely on Zero Retries Interesting topics that are solicited and targeted. I think Amateur Radio really needs regular status updates on significant projects like the Ten Most Interesting Zero Retries Projects - Summer 2023.

Like with Starlink, I didn’t want to commit to the expense of Zoom Pro until there was at least some revenue from Zero Retries. You paid subscribers made it possible for the significant improvement in Zero Retries content now that it will be so much easier and more efficient to conduct interviews for Zero Retries.

Internet Archive / Digital Library of Amateur Radio & Communications

Future generations will praise *our* generation for creating Internet Archive, and within Amateur Radio, the creation of the [Digital Library of Amateur Radio & Communications \(DLARC\)](#). When I mention DLARC to individual Amateur Radio Operators (often as I’m buying a book at a hamfest with the intent to donate it to DLARC), very frequently the seller will remark “I’ve recycled most of my Amateur Radio books and magazines because no one wants them”... proving the point of why DLARC is so badly needed.

Now with Zero Retries generating some revenue, I’m earmarking a portion of that revenue to be donated to Internet Archive from Zero Retries, for the benefit of DLARC. Thank you paid subscribers for making that possible ²

Again... Thanks for being a paid subscriber to Zero Retries! It’s appreciated, and as described above, your paid subscription to Zero Retries is making a material difference in improving Zero Retries.

Steve Stroh N8GNJ
Editor, Zero Retries

Which, in my semi-rural area, I doubt I will ever be available to this household.

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Yes, I can, and have, donated individually to IA, but I think these future donations on behalf of ZR, directed towards DLARC, will be a bit more meaningful / effective.